

ESTABLISHING AN OBJECTIVE PERFORMANCE
EVALUATION PROCESS

EXECUTIVE ANALYSIS OF FIRE SERVICE
OPERATIONS IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This research project described the processes needed to update the firefighter evaluation process in the Benicia Fire Department (BFD). The problem is that the guidelines for writing employee evaluations in the BFD are subjective. The current process may be reducing employee effectiveness; may be hindering professional development; or may be increasing legal exposure to the City or its employees. The purpose of this applied research project was to describe the evaluation process needed to update the current firefighter evaluation process for the BFD.

A descriptive research methodology was used to: determine the Human Resources (HR) evaluation processes for establishing an employee performance program; the national, state, and local guidelines or processes for evaluating firefighters; the HR and Fire Service evaluation processes used by the seven Solano County career, or combination fire departments; and the evaluation processes the BFD should consider when evaluating firefighters.

The procedures used included reviews of articles, publications, job descriptions, evaluation tools, and City policies. Interviews were conducted with fire and HR professionals to gain valuable insight on the evaluation processes being used. The results revealed the need to establish and document the formal processes needed to update the current evaluation program for firefighters in the BFD.

Based on the results of this research, recommendations included using a collaborative approach, with labor and management to: establish a contract with a Management Consultant; develop organizational goals and objectives; perform a job analysis; develop benchmarks, dimensions and standards that tie the job description to the evaluation process; develop a performance policy; develop a training program to instruct supervisors on how to perform evaluation; and implement the performance evaluation program, updating it on a regular basis.

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Benicia is a General Law City, located in the Southwest portion of Solano County, California. According to City of Benicia Human Resources (2005), the City employs 220 full time employees in 11 major departments; Administration, Finance, Parks and Community Services, Fire, Police, Human Resources, City Attorney, City Clerk, Library, Public Works, and Community Development.

The City of Benicia Fire Department is a full service organization. It provides structural and wildland fire suppression, fire prevention, community service programs, non-transport advanced life support, and technical rescue services. One of the most recent expansions of services to the community in recent years has been the establishment of the Benicia Emergency Rescue Team (BERT). Local citizens are brought together; taught principles of disaster response, mitigation, and recovery; formed into community based teams; given caches of equipment; then deployed in their respective neighborhoods. Fire Chief Ken Hanley indicated that the community support for this program has been impressive (K. Hanley, personal communication, June 3, 2005). Deputy Chief Mike Tessier of the Benicia Fire Department confirmed that the City of Benicia Fire Department is one of seven jurisdictions within Solano County which uses a career, or combination, Fire Department to protect its citizens. He went on to explain that the employees have made a difference (M. Tessier, personal interview, August 24, 2005).

The problem is that the guidelines for writing employee evaluations in the Benicia Fire Department are subjective. The current process may be reducing employee effectiveness; may be hindering professional development; or may be increasing legal exposure to the City or its employees.

Based on recommendations from a prior study, (Fiori, 2003) the purpose of this applied research project was to describe the evaluation processes needed to update the current firefighter evaluation process for the Benicia Fire Department. A descriptive research methodology was used to assist in answering the following questions:

Question 1. What are the HR evaluation processes for establishing an employee performance program?

Question 2. What are the national, state, and local guidelines or processes for evaluating firefighters?

Question 3. What are the HR and Fire Service evaluation processes used by the seven Solano County career, or combination, fire departments?

Question 4. What are the evaluation processes the Benicia Fire Department should consider when evaluating firefighters?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

As noted in Fiori (2003), the need to update the current employee evaluation process in the City of Benicia was well documented. Ten recommendations were provided as a result of the study. While the evaluation and implementation of the recommendations are a work-in-progress from a city-wide perspective, there is little disputing that a city-wide change will not occur without a substantial commitment. The most substantial recommendations involved training supervisors; the development of a common policy; tying the overall City Guiding Principles to the evaluation process; and finally setting job specific standards tied to the evaluation process. What Fiori (2003) did not address is the processes needed to carry out the recommendations.

Over the past twenty-two years, the City of Benicia has participated in a number of processes resulting in changes to the firefighter job description and the firefighter evaluation

process. The current firefighter job description was originally established in 1982, with updates in 1998 and 2001. The firefighter evaluation process was first adopted from a generic evaluation tool used by other cities. The document, more specifically the form used to perform the evaluation, has undergone at least two revisions over the past twenty years. There is currently no official process in place to update the firefighter evaluation process. If the Fire Chief or appropriate designee sees the need for a change, the form is changed, and the new information added. An evaluation guideline was established in the mid-1980s, and updated by HR in 2001; however, no one is clear on its roots. Finally, there is no formal training given to supervisors on how to perform an evaluation on a firefighter. Supervisors are encouraged to participate in occasional training sessions on employee evaluations given at seminars. However, no record of any training specific to evaluating firefighters in the Benicia Fire Department has been found (K. Imboden, personal interview, September 6, 2005).

Benicia Fire Department, Deputy Chief Mike Tessier explained that he was part of an attempt to perform a job analysis for each position in the Benicia Fire Department approximately twenty years ago. He went on to explain that “the last attempt to perform a full job analysis for the fire department was initiated by a company called Wolf & Corey, Inc., who put together several instruments. However, the process was never completely finished, mostly due to political or cultural issues” (M. Tessier, personal interview, February 17, 2006).

With reference to evaluating firefighters, Kim Imboden (personal interview, September 6, 2005), noted there are three significant documents:

1. A firefighter job description, modified by management over the years, with the etiology of the base document unclear.

2. An overall City policy covering the employee evaluation process, which provides an overview of how to evaluate the required dimensions of general employee performance, but is not job specific. The policy has been modified by management, and does not have any documented reference to the overall City Guiding Principles, or the fire department goals and objectives.
3. An evaluation form, which has listed dimensions, but no job specific objective performance criteria to measure employee performance.

Imboden acknowledged that what makes this research most significant is the lack of a tangible connection between the firefighter job description, the city policy covering performance evaluations, and the evaluation form used to evaluate firefighters. More detailed information is provided within this research document.

The results of this research will have a significant impact on the Benicia Fire Department and the community as it will be a catalyst for change, not only for the Benicia Fire Department, but the throughout the entire City. This research project was completed according to the applied research requirements of the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program.

The problem addressed by this research related to the Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management (EAFSOM) course (NFA, 2004). More specifically it relates to the EAFSOM course overview, which states that issues will be presented which will require "extensive analysis and action" (p. SM 1-2). The overview also states that "the actions implemented will be applied to a mock community in order to evaluate the effectiveness of these decisions as they relate to the fire and rescue department's operational readiness" (p. SM 1-2). Firefighters are required to make decisions each day. Based on the course overview statement, this research will describe the evaluation processes needed to update the current firefighter

evaluation process for the Benicia Fire Department. Based on the valid and reliable results of individual evaluations, the potential to accurately analyze and evaluate the operational readiness of the Benicia Fire Department would be possible.

LITERATURE REVIEW

For the literature review, the author started with an overview of trade journals and Applied Research papers at the National Fire Academy Learning Research Center (LRC). In addition, on-line research was conducted at the LRC, and other Internet sources for the purpose of locating and reviewing current journal articles, prior research, and general information on the subject. City officials from each City in Solano County with a career or, combination fire department were interviewed to gain a clear understanding of their respective employee evaluation process. Finally, interviews in person, by telephone, and by e-mail were conducted with experienced professionals to gain critical insight on evaluation processes and practices.

Evaluation of Firefighters

According to Retired Fire Chief, and Former California State Fire Marshal Ron Coleman, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1001, Standards for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications, is the leading source document cited by most Fire Departments across the United States. He went on to explain that the problem is that no document exists that specifies exactly what needs to be evaluated and how. Citing the numerous agencies he worked for over the past thirty years, Chief Coleman explained that “employee evaluation is a local issue, and unfortunately the standards used to evaluate firefighters at most fire departments are marginal at best.” He went on to explain that a multitude of documents are available, all subject to interpretation by each respective jurisdiction. What’s worse, he pointed out, is that “most the processes used to establish how firefighters perform have no foundation.” On the subject of

process, Coleman closed expressing concern that many fire service organizations do not follow an organized process when updating standards, job descriptions, or evaluation programs (R. Coleman, telephone interview, March 6, 2006).

Benicia Firefighters Union President, Todd Matthews agreed with Coleman's assessment pointing out that the standards for evaluating firefighters in the Benicia Fire Department are subjective. He went on to explain that the current process was subjective, and varied between supervisors. Finally, he commented that this subjective process is producing subjective results (T. Matthews, personal interview, August 22, 2005).

California State Firefighters Association (CSFA) President Kevin Nida echoed Chief Coleman's comment that an employee evaluation is a local issue, explaining that "the chance of finding two departments who evaluate employees the same way was highly unlikely." When asked to comment further, he used his own department as an example citing that while most agencies utilize a paper process to evaluate their respective employees, the Los Angeles (LA) City Fire Department utilizes a skills-based evaluation process. He went on to explain that "the philosophy of LA City was that this is a hands-on business, so why shouldn't the process to evaluate our fighters be hands-on as well?" When asked to elaborate on why there was so much disparity between how jurisdictions evaluate their respective employees, he highlighted five key elements: First, it's a budget issue. Hiring a professional consultant is not cheap. Many agencies are struggling to keep first-line equipment on the road, and hiring a consultant to perform a job analysis isn't at the top of the priority list. Second, there are agencies who just don't want to know. They have silently adopted a "don't ask, don't tell policy." The theory is that if you look the other way, no one will know your shortcomings. Third, decision makers have forgotten that this is a hands-on profession, suggesting that agencies "seem to spend more

time dotting the 'I's and crossing the 'T's than in the past." Finally, he explained that "many agencies think their internal processes of taking a quick look once-in-a-while meet the intent. Little do they know that it is just a matter of time before they get caught when their internal process is scrutinized as part of the legal process." He noted that labor typically takes a cautious view when it comes to evaluations, particularly when there is the potential for discipline. On the management side, he pointed out that many Fire Chiefs lack the skills to effectively manage an evaluation system. Finally, Nida suggested that identifying weak areas is not popular, and in many instances is skewed by politics. With regard to where firefighter standards are derived, Nida cited (NFPA) Standard 1001 as the primary resource for firefighters (K. Nida, telephone interview, March 7, 2006).

Fire Chief James Broman had similar concerns with regard to the evaluation of firefighters. He also stated that evaluation is a local issue explaining that "nationally it is almost impossible to get organizations on the same page." He stated that his organization has invested more time "developing a good road map rather than spending time with evaluation processes which typically don't work." He cited his committee's work with the International Association of Fire Chiefs in the development of the Fire Officer Handbook, indicating that it was a "monumental task" getting agreement on the document (J. Broman, telephone interview, March 7, 2006).

A few preliminary findings of this research was shared with Mary Ellen Dorsett, President and CEO of Organizational Dimensions, Inc., a well known Florida based Management Consulting Service. Her company provides Human Resource Management Strategies for Organizational Development. She wasn't surprised in hearing the wide range issues with evaluations, citing that "well over 90% of the fire departments around the country

who have an evaluation program have established it without a valid and reliable process to back it up.” When asked why fire departments fail in the area of performance appraisal, she provided a number of reasons: “Lack of education at the top – no catalyst for change; history of tradition, and economic issues” (M. Dorsett, telephone interview, March 19, 2006).

Standards and Guidelines

Based on information provided in interviews with (R. Coleman, telephone interview, March 6, 2006 and K. Nida, telephone interview, March 7, 2006), there are six primary sources of standards used by the fire services in the State of California: the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA); the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG); the International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA); the National Incident Management System (NIMS); Firefighting Resources of California Organized for Potential Emergencies (FIREScope); and the California State Fire Marshal’s Office (CSFMO).

The NFPA, more specifically NFPA Standard 1001, specifies “the minimum job performance requirements for firefighters” (NFPA, 2002, 1.1). The document is divided into six chapters: Administration, Referenced Publications, Definitions, Entrance Requirements, Firefighter 1, and Firefighter 2. It addresses the following key areas of performance: General Knowledge, General Skills, Fire Department Communications, Fireground Operations, Rescue Operations, Prevention, Preparedness, and Maintenance. Each key area is broken down into more specific requirements throughout the document, such as (5.3.6) “Set up ground ladders, given single and extension ladders, an assignment, and team members if needed, so the hazards are assessed...”

The NWCG was initially created for the purpose of “establishing an operational group designed to coordinate programs of the participating wildfire management agencies” (NWCG

2005). The participating agencies are currently: the Bureau of Indian Affairs; the Bureau of Land Management; United States Fish and Wildlife Service; the National Park Service; the Aviation and Fire Management, U.S. Forest Service; the National Association of State Foresters; and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Fire Administration (NWCG 2006). The base document created by the NWCG established the position standards for those engaged in wildland firefighting operations based on a certification and qualification system (PMS 310-1, 2006). On November 2, 2000, the California State Board of Fire Services approved the standards as identified in PMS 310-1, and created the California Incident Command Certification System (CICCS) (NIMSC, 2006). CICCS identifies the minimum standards for positions who engage in wildland firefighting operations based on a rigid certification and qualification system.

The IFSTA was founded in 1932. The primary purpose for the organization was to produce and market validated fire service training materials that were high-quality, technically accurate, and affordable (IFSTA, 2005). IFSTA manuals have been produced to cover each fire service training need as identified in the NFPA 2001 standard (IFSTA 2006). It is important to note that all IFSTA fire service training materials are based on NFPA standards.

The NIMS “was developed so responders from different jurisdictions and disciplines can work together better to respond to natural disaster and emergencies, including acts of terrorism” (NIMS 2006a). On October 4, 2005, the NIMS Integration Center was established to assist agencies with the implementation of the NIMS within their respective jurisdictions (NIMS Integration, 2006). The official NIMS program outlines the elements of command and control, and how information is coordinated (NIMS 2006b).

Firefighting Resources of California Organized for Potential Emergencies (FIREScope) “was organized after the disastrous 1970 wildland fires in southern California. The goal of this

group was to create and implement new applications in fire service management, technology and coordination, with an emphasis on incident command and multi-agency coordination”

(FIREScope, 2005). Coleman referenced the Field Operations Guide (FOG), ICS 420-1 (FIREScope, 2004), as “one of the most significant resources ever developed” The FOG is now used as a primary source document at the Emergency Management Institute and the National Fire Academy (R. Coleman, telephone interview, March 6, 2006).

The role of the State Fire Marshal’s Office, more commonly referred to as State Fire Training “has evolved from one in which the State Fire Marshal staff worked directly with fire departments delivering fire service training classes to one of coordination for the statewide training delivery and certification system” (CFSTES, 2001). It is safe to say that the State Fire Marshal’s Office is the primary source of information for fire departments operating in California (R. Coleman, telephone interview, March 6, 2006).

Local Processes and Evaluation Programs

The City of Benicia’s evaluation process was covered extensively in prior research. In brief, there is an annual performance evaluation process being used to evaluate firefighters. There is no formal training program in place to train supervisors. However, there is a training document available as a guide, and supervisors are encouraged to attend outside training when it becomes available. Finally, several revisions to the annual performance evaluation program have taken place over the past twenty years (Fiori 2003).

In follow-up discussions with City of Benicia Senior HR Analyst Kim Imboden, the processes utilized to establish the firefighter evaluation process were not clear. In fact, there were no formal records available to specifically document the processes used leading to the current system in place (K. Imboden, personal interview, September 6, 2005). Further follow-up

with City of Benicia HR Director Dianne O'Connell identified that a number of changes to the program had been made, however formal documentation of an official process establishing the evaluation system was not available. She went on to explain that an extensive internal evaluation had been conducted about fifteen years ago, which reviewed the job descriptions. The last modification to the fire department evaluation process was made in 1994, where the evaluation form underwent several changes. With regard to training, O'Connell pointed out that the supervisors have been encouraged to attend regional training sessions on the performance evaluation process (D. O'Connell, personal interview, October 12, 2005).

Benicia Firefighters, Local 1186 Union President Todd Matthews felt that the current process to evaluate firefighters was subjective citing the lack of clear cut standards, and a system subject to interpretation. He went on to explain that it would be advantageous to everyone if a better method of evaluating firefighters was researched and implemented. (T. Mathews, personal interview August 22, 2005).

Imboden explained the typical process used to update the firefighter job description. She stated that typically, the firefighter job description is updated just prior to a hiring process but could be updated at any time. Just prior to recruitment, HR sends the Fire Chief a current copy of the job description asking for changes. The Fire Chief reviews the document and makes the necessary updates, then forwards the document back to HR for review by the HR Director. Once it passes through the HR Director, the recommended changes are sent to the Firefighters Union, and then placed on the agenda for review by the Civil Service Commission. Pending no issues, the Civil Service Commission approves the changes as written; modifies the changes; or denies the changes. If the Firefighters Union and the City are not in agreement with regard to the impact of the changes, the City schedules a Meet and Confer process with the Firefighters Union.

If no agreement is reached and the two groups are at impasse, the City has three options: Call in a Mediator and attempt to resolve the issues; drop the changes altogether; or implement the changes under very strict regulations. In most cases, both parties prefer the cooperative approach. On a final note, the fire department is not the only source for recommending changes. HR can recommend updates as well, based on changes in the industry standards (K. Imboden, personal interview, February 18, 2006).

The 1982 version of the firefighter job description was obtained from an existing job description from outside the area. The Fire Chief at the time approved the job description then sent it forward to the Civil Service Commission for final approval (M. Tessier, personal interview, February 16, 2006). Deputy Chief Gantt indicated he was aware of the process in 1982, but was unclear if it was ever concluded. He suggested that the time is right to formally evaluate the current evaluation program (G. Gantt, personal interview, February 16, 2006).

In addition to obtaining information on the Benicia Fire Department, interviews were conducted to obtain information on the firefighter evaluation processes used by each of the other six career, or combination, fire departments in Solano County. Each fire department: City of Dixon, City of Fairfield, City of Rio Vista, City of Suisun, City of Vacaville, and City of Vallejo provided information on their respective process: In most cases, a follow-up was conducted to each individual Human Resource (HR) Department to clarify the process for each jurisdiction or agency. The following two questions were asked of each agency:

1. Does the fire department conduct annual performance evaluations on its firefighters?
2. Was a formal process used to develop the annual performance evaluation process currently being used?

Dixon Fire Department Administrative Manager Andi Horigan explained the evaluation program used by the Dixon Fire Department. She indicated that the supervisors are expected to evaluate their subordinates using the evaluation tools provided. She was not aware of a formal training process where supervisors were specifically trained on how to conduct evaluations on their subordinates, but did suggest that some of the material was covered by an orientation process for new supervisors (A. Horigan, phone interview March 17, 2006). Former City of Dixon HR Analyst Celeste Garrett could not recall if a formal process had ever been used to establish the employee evaluation program, (C. Garrett, telephone interview March 17, 2006).

HR Employee Relations Manager Dawn Villarreal, reviewed the evaluation program for the Fairfield Fire Department. “I’ve been here for over eight years, and whatever process was used to establish the system the fire department currently uses was done long before I got here.” She expressed concern over the current system the fire department was using by citing the lack of a formal process to establish the standards. She went on to explain that no formal documentation was available to validate the current fire department employee evaluation program. The police department went through a significant process several years ago, says Villarreal. The City contracted with a consultant to perform an analysis of each position in the police department, and then established a new evaluation system which tied the job description to the evaluation process. The process was cooperative in that labor and management worked together. Work groups were formed, research was conducted, and standards were developed. She hopes a similar process will be utilized to bring the fire department program up-to-date. She suggested contacting Marin Consulting Associates for follow-up on the process (D. Villarreal, telephone interview, March 20, 2006). Tossah Ebert, Office Specialist for the Fairfield Fire Department commented that the supervisors are given some nominal training on how to evaluate

employees when they are first hired, but little if any follow-up training is done. She agreed with Villarreal in that the lack of consistency of the evaluations conducted indicates that a better system is needed (T. Ebert, phone interview, March 20, 2006).

Fire Chief Mark Nelson from the Rio Vista Fire Department stated that his organization inherited an evaluation tool prior to his arrival. He was not aware of any formal processes taking place to establish the system, but indicated that he is looking into updating a number of key documents in his organization. With regard to supervisor training on the evaluation process, he indicated that it was covered during the orientation process (M. Nelson, telephone interview, March 27, 2006).

Fire Chief Mike O'Brien of the Suisun City Fire Department was not clear of how his evaluation process was established. He went on to explain that his HR Department had no record of a formal process, and no recollection that a formal study had ever been conducted. He went on to explain that minor modifications have been made over the past few years to professionalize the process. O'Brien conducts the evaluations on his paid staff personally, since there are only three full-time employees. He is self-taught, and keeps up on the evaluation process through ongoing professional development (M. O'Brien, personal interview, September 7, 2005).

City of Vacaville Supervising HR Analyst Celeste Garrett stated that the City of Vacaville Fire Department uses a system driven by management from the late 1980s. She described the process which included a significant narrative component. Even though an updated format was produced a few years ago using a cooperative process, she feels the current system is laborious, and may be losing its overall effectiveness. She outlined the components of the process used to implement the current system starting with the Police Department. The Police Department formed a committee; then instituted a multi-step process to analyze each

position; then tied the evaluation process to each position. Approximately two years later, the Fire Department adopted the system with several modifications. However, it was not clear if the Fire Department formally analyzed each position as did the Police Department (C. Garrett, telephone interview, March 20, 2006). Training Officer Shep Harper commented on the training aspect of the evaluation program suggesting it “could use a face-lift.” When asked to elaborate, he indicated that the process relied heavily on writing skills, which added a level of subjectivity to the system (S. Harper, personal interview, March 21, 2006).

Assistant Chief of Training LaMonte Morris indicated that the Vallejo Fire Department did not use an annual evaluation process for any employees of the fire department. He indicated that the only formal evaluation of employees took place during the first three years of employment. He, with his extensive training background, Assistant Chief Morris remains hopeful that a formal system could be put in place. He commented that, “if we don’t have a measurement tool in place, it’s difficult to know how good we really are.” (L. Morris, personal interview, December 4, 2005).

In a follow-up discussion with City of Vallejo Acting Assistant HR Director Deborah Boutte, she indicated that the City of Vallejo had been working on implementing an employee evaluation process over the past several years. She went on to explain that many Departments within the City are using the new evaluation process, however, during the part of the process where job analysis was being tied to the performance it was discovered that the Fire Department rules and regulations were outdated. The process for the Fire Department was temporarily suspended until the opportunity presented itself to update the Fire Department Rules and Regulations. She indicated that updating the Fire Department Rules and Regulations has been a work-in-progress for the past couple of years, and is expected to take another year or two to

complete. Once the Rules and Regulations have been updated, the development of the evaluation tools will be established for the Fire Department (D. Boutte, telephone interview, March 22, 2006)

Past Litigation Plays a Role

City of Benicia Attorney Heather McLaughlin noted that employee files, particularly employee evaluations are becoming a focal point in litigation. She cited a number of legal actions over the years where employee performance evaluations were referenced or reviewed as part of the case. Examples, (Retrieved from <http://www.lexis.com>, July 12, 2005) included: (C. Byron Scott v. Pacific Gas & Electric Company, 1995), (Sandella S. Spears, v. Missouri Department of Corrections and Human Resources, 2004), (Steven Rider, v. California Beach Restaurants, Inc., 2001), (Adolphus Ray Morgan, v. The Regents of the University of California, 2000), and (James M. Turner, v. Anheuser Busch, Inc., 1994) to name a few. In the above noted cases, she pointed out that employee evaluation is becoming a significant factor with regards to litigation (H. McLaughlin, personal interview, March 22, 2006).

Citing (Griggs v. Duke Power Co, 1971), Dr. Richard Resurrection, PhD, pointed out that the outcome of cases such as Griggs which do not necessarily involve employee evaluations have had a profound impact on how employee evaluation is viewed. In (Griggs v. Duke Power Co, 1971), the primary issue was employee testing for promotion. It was upheld that the employer had the right to establish testing procedures. However, the most significant outcome with respect to employee evaluation was that the testing must be job related. The implications of the case have been far reaching, and have been cited in current cases involving employee performance. The bottom line is that employee performance evaluation must be specifically related to the job, (R. Resurreccion, telephone interview, January 3, 2006).

Examples of Processes

“One of the primary source documents for HR is the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures.” Mr. David Hudson from Marin Consulting Associates, St. Helena, CA, explained that the UG provides a basis for processes used in testing, evaluation, hiring, promotion, etc. (D. Hudson, telephone interview, March 24, 2006). Resurreccion added that the UG was an invaluable resource for employment practices, and processes (R. Resurreccion, telephone interview, January 3, 2006). The Uniform Guidelines do not specify which processes to follow. It provides “principles which are designed to assist employers, labor organizations, employment agencies, and licensing and certification boards to comply with requirements of Federal law prohibiting employment practices which discriminate on grounds of race, color, religion, sex, and national origin” (Biddle, 1978).

If established correctly, a standard or guideline is produced as a result of a process or procedure. To that end, a more detailed explanation of what types of processes are needed to establish performance evaluation is required (D. Hudson, telephone interview, March 24, 2006). Mr. Hudson noted that the basis for most processes started with the Uniform Guidelines, noting that the scope of the document has changed, even expanded over the years.

In a telephone interview with Mr. Hudson (March 24, 2006), a detailed description of the processes he uses for the development of a performance based system was shared. In addition, Mr. Hudson provided a nine-page set of notes to clarify the discussion. According to Hudson, many fire departments feel that putting together an evaluation process just involves putting together a form; writing a basic procedure; then requiring the evaluation be filled out each year by the appropriate supervisor. The real progressive agencies even put together a training document, which may get looked at for fifteen minutes when the new supervisor first gets hired.

All kidding aside, that's the honest truth. However, "A true evaluation of a person requires an organizational commitment, not just the filling out of a form. In addition, there are steps or processes an organization must go through before even considering the development of performance standards" (D. Hudson, telephone interview, March 24, 2006).

Part of the process for the development of a performance evaluation program requires a separate process to update each of the following vital documents: A statement of goals and objectives for the organization; an updated set of standard operating procedures or guidelines; and a valid job description.

The organization must have clear direction based on solid goals and objectives. A performance based system cannot be written without an organizational road map. In many instances the overall goals and objectives are established by elected officials, city managers, or governing boards; then handed down to a particular department. However, the preferred method of establishing the goals and objectives is to utilize a collaborative process involving a cross section of the organization. In most cases, a collaborative approach will produce a more meaningful product that has the buy-in from all concerned, particularly one that involves labor and management.

Next, standard operating procedures or guidelines must be up-to-date. If there is any expectation of holding people accountable, the operational procedures or guidelines must be current. That means they must go through a review process on a regular basis. It is not necessary to update every policy each year, as long as there is a review process in place which occurs over a pre-determined period of time. Just to state the obvious, a twenty-year old policy where the pages are stuck together might make a great book end, but it has little value when someone attempts to use it.

Finally, the employee job description must be accurate and representative of the essential elements of the job. No matter what process anyone uses, it will be doomed from the start if the job description is not valid and up-to-date. More specifically, “the performance must be tied to the job.”

Hudson found that: most agencies don’t go the extra mile to clarify job-specific performance expectations. “Many say it can’t be done”, and drop the idea. This lack of agency-approved standards means that each supervisor and each manager must bring his or her own vision to work every day and try to do the best they can when rating employee performance. Then, the supervisor’s completed evaluation, composed of vague opinions makes little sense to the next level of review. If a manager disagrees with the supervisor’s opinion, it is hard to contest it because managers are seldom involved in the day-to-day effort on the street. Finally, in the crunch of business, we give up and think, *what the heck, I’ll approve this inflated evaluation and get the thing off my desk.*

Everybody else does the same, so it must not really matter... and besides he rotates in a few weeks, so...(D. Hudson, telephone interview, March 24, 2006).

Once organizational goals and objectives have been established; standard operating procedures updated; and job descriptions reviewed for validity via the appropriate process, the process establishing a “performance based” evaluation program can begin. Hudson goes into great detail on the differences between types of evaluation systems. Although some may identify three broad categories, Hudson feels there are two categories of evaluation systems:

“Opinion/Personality-based evaluations, and Performance-based evaluations. He freely admits he is biased toward the performance-based approach because in his mind, it is clearly less

subjective. He goes into detail outlining the particulars on each type of process, concluding with his recommendation to utilize a performance-based system.

With the ultimate goal of “bridging the accountability gap” Hudson recommends a six step process in the development of performance standards:

Step 1 - “develop the performance standards getting managers and supervisors on the same page. In this collaborative step, managers and supervisors jointly draft performance standards that they (managers and their first-line supervisors) can understand and support.” Hudson points out that this is “often the most difficult part of the transition to performance-based evaluations.” It is important to note that Hudson is not supportive of a committee process to establish the standards. He comments that it is the “command-supervisory team that must be on the same page, rather than just a committee.”

Step 2 – “implement a performance-based evaluation system.” This is where the system of how to use the program comes into place.

Step 3 – “develop clear guidelines.” This is a step-by-step process “that should include the actions expected of all supervisors when their employees meet standards, as well as when they do not.”

Step 4 – “make the supervisors and managers accountable for assuring that employees meet the standards drafted in Step 2. Each level of supervision and management must be held accountable for performance assurance.”

Step 5 – “perform accountability training for supervisors and managers.”

Hudson found that for forty years, management training has failed to address the job of achieving and maintaining accountability in organizations across America. “We found that most supervisors do not have a clear grasp of this all-important aspect of leadership. When their

human-relations techniques don't work in correcting a problem performer, the thousands of supervisors we have surveyed seem to have no back up position.”

Step 6 – perform an “executive audit. A simple routine must be established wherein the chief executive of the Department or Division must personally compare the actual performance delivered by several employees against the supervisors’ rating of those same employees.” This will add validity to the evaluation process (D. Hudson, telephone interview, March 24, 2006).

Establishing a firefighter performance evaluation process requires a series of individual processes, said Hudson, each addressing a particular component. He recommended that organizations:

develop organizational goals and objectives; perform a detailed job analysis; develop a job description based on the job analysis; establish benchmarks or dimensions to be evaluated; develop performance standards linked to the organizational goals and objectives, and the job description; establish a performance management policy; develop and implement training guidelines; implement the performance evaluation program; and perform periodic updating (D. Hudson, telephone interview, March 24, 2006).

In closing, Hudson freely admitted that he is biased with regard to which process to follow, because he has had great success in helping organizations grow. However, he was quick to point out that “the organizations who have the greatest problems are the ones who do not follow any established process” (D. Hudson, telephone interview, March 24, 2006).

The Performance-Based Handbook (PBH) is another example of a process to follow when establishing and maintaining a performance-based management program (Artley, W., Ellison D.J., & Kennedy B., September 2001). The PBH outlines a six step process to establish a Performance-Based Management Program (pp1-3). Another example is the Performance

Management: Development Plan – for organizations, subsystems, process or employees (Appendix A). McNamara illustrates a slightly different approach using fourteen steps for the development of a Performance Plan. Finally, Heathfield uses a Performance Management Process Checklist to illustrate how to establish a Performance Management Process (Appendix B).

The processes noted in this research have similarities to the processes used in the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program course entitled Leading Community Risk Reduction (LCRR). The five steps listed in the LCRR Community Risk Reduction Model are: Getting Ready; Assessing the Community; Identifying Intervention Strategies; Taking Action; and Evaluating the Program. While the LCRR process was designed to establish a risk reduction program in a respective jurisdiction, it represents a valid and reliable process to achieve a result (NFA, 2003, p.SM 0-10).

Summary

The National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA), Standard 1001 is recognized as the national standard for firefighter professional qualifications (R. Coleman, telephone interview, March 6, 2006). In addition to the NFPA, Standard 1001, California recognizes five other sources of standards with regards to the evaluation of firefighters: the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG), which is primarily responsible for establishing wildland certification and qualification standards; the International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA), which is one of the leading sources of fire service training materials; The National Incident Management System (NIMS), which is responsible for the development of a Nationally recognized Incident Management System; Firefighting Resources of California Organized for Potential Emergencies (FIREScope), which is charged with the development of Incident

Management Systems for California; and the California State Fire Marshal's Office (CSFMO), which, among other things, has been charged with establishing the minimum qualifications for firefighters in the State of California (R. Coleman, telephone interview, March 6, 2006), and (K. Nida, telephone interview, March 7, 2006).

As Fiori (2003) pointed out, city-wide issues exist with regards to the employee evaluation process. No formal training program to train supervisors is in place, and formal revisions have not taken place in over twenty years. Follow-up with key individuals from the City of Benicia highlighted the lack of documentation with regards to the basis for the existing evaluation program used to evaluate firefighters. This finding redirected the research from establishing standards, to identifying processes that should be utilized to update the evaluation process (K. Imboden, personal interview, September 6, 2005). At least one formal attempt was made to formally update the firefighter job description in the early 1980s, however it was never fully completed (M. Tessier, personal interview, February 16, 2006). The current process for updating the firefighter job description is an internal review process. No documentation could be provided to support that a formal process was ever conducted to establish the firefighter job description (K. Imboden, personal interview, September 6, 2005).

Interviews with key individuals from other fire agencies in Solano County produced similar results. The City of Dixon has an evaluation process, but could not recall how the process was established (A. Horigan, phone interview March 17, 2006). The City of Fairfield underwent a formal process to update the evaluation process for the Police Department, but has not yet updated the Fire Department process (D. Villarreal, telephone interview, March 20, 2006). The Rio Vista Fire Department inherited an evaluation program. At this time it is not clear what, if anything will be done to update it (M. Nelson, telephone interview, March 27,

2006). The City of Vacaville Fire Department also utilized a formal process to update the Police Department evaluation process, and then adopted the concept for use in the Fire Department. Job specific evaluation tools were not formally established for the Fire Department. C. Garrett, telephone interview, March 20, 2006). The City of Vallejo does not currently utilize an evaluation process for firefighters after the initial probationary process. The City of Vallejo started a formal process, but had to delay implementation in the Fire Department because of other outdated supporting documents (L. Morris, personal interview, December 4, 2005).

Although California utilizes many standards and guidelines, the ultimate decision on how firefighters are evaluated is a local issue (R. Coleman, telephone interview, March 6, 2006), and (K. Nida, telephone interview, March 7, 2006). A variety of issues prevent Fire Departments from using a formal process to update or establish an evaluation program. Identifying weak areas is not popular, and in many instances is skewed by politics (K. Nita, telephone interview, March 7, 2006). Dorsett added that a lack of education at the top and a history of tradition have hampered changes as well (M. Dorsett, telephone interview, March 19, 2006). Hudson commented that many fire departments feel that putting together an evaluation process just involves putting together a form and writing a basic procedure (D. Hudson, telephone interview, March 24, 2006).

The basis for most employment processes start with the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (UG) (D. Hudson, telephone interview, March 24, 2006). Resurreccion added that the UG was an invaluable resource for employment practices, and processes (R. Resurreccion, telephone interview, January 3, 2006). The stated purpose of the UG is to “assist employers, labor organizations, employment agencies, and licensing and certification boards to comply with requirements of Federal law prohibiting employment

practices which discriminate on grounds of race, color, religion, sex, and national origin” (Biddle, 1978). However, Hudson and Resurreccion expanded the definition to include evaluation practices (D. Hudson, telephone interview, March 24, 2006 and R. Resurreccion, telephone interview, January 3, 2006).

Past litigation has an impact on process with regards to firefighter evaluation. McLaughlin highlighted court cases where employee evaluations were cited during the litigation process. She pointed out that employee evaluation is becoming a significant factor (H. McLaughlin, personal interview, March 22, 2006). Resurreccion added that the outcome of cases which have not related to employee evaluation have had a profound effect on how employee evaluation is viewed (R. Resurreccion, telephone interview, January 3, 2006).

Several processes were identified as examples. Hudson commented that developing an evaluation process involves updating many documents, such as job descriptions and standard operating procedures. He went on to describe a cooperative approach which involved labor and management. He started with outlining the need for goals and objectives, which led to identifying the essential elements of a firefighter’s job. He then focused on the development of the evaluation tools. Finally, he elaborated on the need to tie the goals and objectives, the essential elements of a firefighter’s job, and the evaluation tools together (D. Hudson, telephone interview, March 24, 2006).

Similar processes were identified: the Performance-Based Handbook (Artley, W., Ellison, D.J., & Kennedy, B., September 2001); the Performance Management: Development Plan (Appendix A); and the Performance Management Process Checklist (Appendix B), which approach the issues from different angles.

PROCEDURES

Definitions

Combination Fire Department: An organized Fire Department which uses a combination of paid, volunteer, or part-time staff to carry out its mission.

Career Fire Department: An organized Fire Department which uses paid staff, in addition to the Fire Chief, to carry out its mission.

Formal Evaluation Program: An established performance appraisal given to firefighters at least once per year.

Formal Process: A process which has been approved by a governing body.

Process: A procedure or particular course of action intended to achieve a result (Google, 2006).

Research Methodology

Initially, this research was to identify specific objective standards to be used when performing firefighter annual evaluations in the Benicia Fire Department. However, due to an unexpected result (K. Imboden, personal communication, September 6, 2005), the focus of the research was significantly changed. With the new focus, the desired outcome of this research was to describe the evaluation processes needed to update the current firefighter evaluation process for the Benicia Fire Department. A descriptive research method was used to identify the HR evaluation processes for establishing an employee performance program; to identify National, State, and local guidelines or processes for evaluating firefighters; to identify HR and Fire Service evaluation processes used by the seven Solano County career, or combination, fire departments; and to identify what evaluation processes the Benicia Fire Department should consider when evaluating firefighters.

The research procedures used in preparation of this document began with an informal discussion with City of Benicia Fire Chief Ken Hanley in June of 2005 where we discussed the evaluation of firefighters. While a number of City issues were discussed, narrowing the parameters of the research to the Fire Department was our logical conclusion. He indicated that the evaluation of firefighters was a very difficult task, particularly when it came to labor and management entering discussions on what happens when an employee doesn't do well on an evaluation. The first interview was conducted on June 3, 2005, with follow up interviews conducted throughout the research project. The final interview was conducted on February 22, 2006.

In June 2005, an extensive literature review was conducted utilizing the resources available through the Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the National Emergency Training Center (NETC). Literature was also obtained through the use of the Interlibrary Loan Program (ILP) using the City of Benicia Public Library in Benicia, California. Additional literature was obtained through the following: an in-depth search of the Internet; a review of professional journals and trade magazines; requests for professional publications available through the HR Department; requests for legal case studies through the City Attorney; and personal, telephone, and electronic mail interviews with City, Fire Department, and business professionals.

Benicia Firefighters, Local 1186 Union President Todd Matthews was interviewed to share his thoughts on the current evaluation process, and the processes needed to update the process currently being used. The first interview was conducted on August 22, 2005, with follow up interviews conducted throughout the research project. The final interview was conducted on January 26, 2006.

(Fiori 2003) was cited as the starting point for the research. Interviews were then conducted with a representative from each of the seven career, or combination, fire departments in Solano County: City of Benicia, City of Dixon, City of Fairfield, City of Rio Vista, City of Suisun, City of Vacaville, and City of Vallejo. Although representatives from each jurisdiction or agency shared their thoughts on the process, each was asked to answer the following two specific questions:

1. Does the fire department conduct annual performance evaluations on its firefighters?
2. Was a formal process used to determine the annual performance evaluation process currently being used?

Interviews were conducted with the following individuals because of their specific experience in the areas of management process, development of firefighter standards, or legal processes as it relates to employee law: Retired Fire Chief and former California State Fire Marshal Ron Coleman, Fire Chief James M. Broman, CSFA President Kevin Nida, Richard Resurreccion, PhD, and Mary Ellen Dorsett.

Retired Fire Chief, and former California State Fire Marshal Ron Coleman, was interviewed due to his extensive history with the California fire service. He was asked to discuss how the standards for firefighters became what it is today. In addition, he was asked to identify which standards apply to firefighters in the State of California (R. Coleman, telephone communication, March 6, 2006).

Fire Chief James M. Broman was contacted based on the recommendation of former Fire Chief Ron Coleman. Chief Broman is the Fire Chief of the Lacey Fire District #3. In addition to his over 40 years in the fire service, Chief Broman served on the Governor's Fire Protection Policy Board for the State of Washington. He currently serves as the Chair of the Professional

Development Committee for the International Association of Fire Chiefs. Chief Broman was one of the primary individuals responsible for the development of the International Association of Fire Chiefs Fire Officer Development project. Even though the document was specific to Fire Officers, he was asked to elaborate on the impact of the document as it relates to firefighters (J. Broman, telephone interview, March 7, 2006).

Richard Resurreccion, PhD is a Human Resource Development Consultant for the Long Beach (CA) Fire Department and Professor Emeritus at California State University, Long Beach. Dr. Resurreccion was asked to provide insight on what firefighter standards exist for the evaluation of firefighters. In addition, he was asked to provide information on what processes an organization should utilize when establishing an annual performance evaluation program (R. Resurreccion, telephone interview, January 3, 2006).

Mary Ellen Dorsett is the President and CEO of Organizational Dimensions, Inc., an established Florida based Management Consulting Service. Her company provides Human Resource Management Strategies for organizational development. She also teaches in the Management Science track at the National Fire Academy. With her professional background and instructional experience, she was asked to comment on the percentage of fire departments in the United States which have issues with their management processes. She was also asked to comment on why fire departments fail in the area of performance appraisal (M. Dorsett, telephone interview, March 19, 2006)

California State Firefighters Association (CSFA) President Kevin Nida was contacted to discuss his perspectives on evaluating firefighters. He was also asked to comment on any State or National Standards for evaluating firefighters (K. Nida, telephone interview, March 7, 2006).

Two attempts were made over the course of the research project to discuss this research with the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF). The purpose was to gain a National perspective on firefighter evaluations, and the processes used to establish standards. To my disappointment, the IAFF declined to comment, indicating that all inquiries to the IAFF must come directly from a Union President of a represented local. It was felt that sending correspondence through a third party would not produce valid results. Therefore, communication with the IAFF was abandoned after the second attempt.

Marin Consulting Associates was utilized by the City of Fairfield Human Resources Department to establish performance standards for their respective police department. Mr. David Hudson from Marin Consulting Associates, St. Helena, CA, was contacted to give a detailed description of a process used for the development of a performance based system (D. Hudson, telephone interview, March 24, 2006). Mr. Hudson provided a nine-page set of notes via electronic mail to clarify the discussion (D. Hudson, electronic mail notes, March 24, 2006).

Interviews were conducted with the following City of Benicia employees with specific information on processes used by the City of Benicia: Deputy Chief Gene Gantt; Deputy Chief Michael Tessier; HR Analyst Kim Imboden; and HR Director Diane O'Connell.

Gene Gantt is a Deputy Fire Chief, and Fire Marshal for the Benicia Fire Department (BFD). With over 20 years of experience with the BFD, Deputy Chief Gantt was asked to assist in explaining the processes used by the BFD with regards to the firefighter annual performance evaluation process (G. Gantt, personal interview, February 16, 2006).

Michael Tessier is the Deputy Fire Chief of Operations for the Benicia Fire Department (BFD). He has over 22 years of service with the BFD, and has been directly involved in virtually every employee related process concerning the fire department. He was asked to assist in

explaining the employee related processes used by the BFD over the past 20 years. The first interview was conducted on August 24, 2005, with follow up interviews conducted throughout the research project. The final interview was conducted on February 17, 2006.

Kim Imboden is the HR Analyst for the City of Benicia. She was interviewed as the primary source of information with regards to the history of the processes used for establishing the firefighter job descriptions, evaluation processes, and training documents. The first interview was conducted September 6, 2005, with follow up interviews conducted throughout the research project. The final interview was conducted on April 3, 2006.

Diane O'Connell is the HR Director for the City of Benicia. She was used primarily to validate the information provided by HR Analyst Kim Imboden. The first interview was conducted on October 12, 2005, with the final interview conducted on April 5, 2006.

Heather McLaughlin is the City Attorney for the City of Benicia. She was contacted to assist in locating lawsuits which had an impact on the establishment of evaluation processes (H. McLaughlin, personal interview, March 22, 2006).

In addition, interviews were conducted to obtain information on the firefighter evaluation processes used by each of the following six career, or combination fire departments in Solano County:

Dixon - Andi Horigan (A. Horigan, telephone interview, March 17, 2006), and Celest Garrett (C. Garrett, telephone interview, March 17, 2006).

Fairfield – Dawn Villarreal (D. Villarreal, telephone interview, March 20, 2006), and Tossah Ebert (T. Ebert, telephone interview, March 20, 2006).

Rio Vista – Mark Nelson (M. Nelson, telephone interview, March 27, 2006).

Suisun City – Mike O'Brien (M. O'Brien, telephone interview, September 7, 2005).

Vacaville City – Celeste Garrett (C. Garrett, telephone interview, March 20, 2006), and Shep Harper (S. Harper, telephone interview, March 21, 2006).

Vallejo – LaMonte Morris (L. Morris, telephone interview, December 4, 2005), and Deborah Boutte (D. Boutte, telephone interview, March 22, 2006).

RESULTS

Answers to research questions:

Research Question 1: If established correctly, a standard or guideline is produced as a result of a process or procedure. The basis for most employment processes start with the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (UG) (D. Hudson, telephone interview, March 24, 2006). Resurreccion added that the UG was an invaluable resource for employment practices, and processes (R. Resurreccion, telephone interview, January 3, 2006). The stated purpose of the UG is to “assist employers, labor organizations, employment agencies, and licensing and certification boards to comply with requirements of Federal law prohibiting employment practices which discriminate on grounds of race, color, religion, sex, and national origin” (Biddle, 1978). However, Hudson and Resurreccion expanded the definition to include evaluation practices (D. Hudson, telephone interview, March 24, 2006 and R. Resurreccion, telephone interview, January 3, 2006).

Part of the process for the development of a performance evaluation program requires a separate process to update each of the following vital documents: A statement of goals and objectives for the organization; an updated set of standard operating procedures or guidelines; and a valid job description. In addition, with the ultimate goal of “bridging the accountability gap” Hudson recommends a six step process in the development of performance standards:

Step 1 - “develop the performance standards getting managers and supervisors on the same page. In this collaborative step, managers and supervisors jointly draft performance standards that they (managers and their first-line supervisors) can understand and support.” Hudson points out that this is “often the most difficult part of the transition to performance-based evaluations.” It is important to note that Hudson is not supportive of a committee process to establish the standards. He comments that it is the “command-supervisory team that must be on the same page, rather than just a committee.”

Step 2 – “implement a performance-based evaluation system.” This is where the system of how to use the program comes into place.

Step 3 – “develop clear guidelines.” This is a step-by-step process “that should include the actions expected of all supervisors when their employees meet standards, as well as when they do not.”

Step 4 – “make the supervisors and managers accountable for assuring that employees meet the standards drafted in Step 2. Each level of supervision and management must be held accountable for performance assurance.”

Step 5 – “perform accountability training for supervisors and managers.” Hudson found that for forty years, management training has failed to address the job of achieving and maintaining accountability in organizations across America. “We found that most supervisors do not have a clear grasp of this all-important aspect of leadership. When their human-relations techniques don’t work in correcting a problem performer, the thousands of supervisors we have surveyed seem to have no back up position.”

Step 6 – perform an “executive audit. A simple routine must be established wherein the chief executive of the Department of Division must personally compare the actual performance

delivered by several employees against the supervisors' rating of those same employees." This will add validity to the evaluation process (D. Hudson, telephone interview, March 24, 2006).

The Performance-Based Handbook, (Artley, W., Ellison D.J., & Kennedy B., September 2001) outlines a six step process to establish a Performance-Based Management Program to include: "Defining Organizational Mission and Strategic Performance Objectives; Establishing an Integrated Performance Measurement System; Establishing Accountability for Performance; Establishing a System/Process for Collecting Data to Assess Performance; Establishing a System/Process for Analyzing, Reviewing, and Reporting Performance Data; and Establishing a System/Process for Using Performance Information to Drive Improvement" (pp.1-3).

The Performance Management: Development Plan – for organizations, subsystems, process or employees, (Appendix A) illustrates a slightly different approach using fourteen steps for the development of a Performance Plan. Finally, the Performance Management Process Checklist, (Appendix B) illustrates five processes, which will assist in the development of a Performance Management Process.

The processes noted in this research are similar to the processes used in the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program course entitled Leading Community Risk Reduction (LCRR). The five steps listed in the LCRR Community Risk Reduction Model are: Getting Ready; Assessing the Community; Identifying Intervention Strategies; Taking Action; and Evaluating the Program. While the LCRR process was designed to establish a risk reduction program in a respective jurisdiction, it represents a valid and reliable process to achieve a result (NFA, 2003, p.SM 0-10).

Research Question 2: There is no known requirement on a National or State level requiring an entity to evaluate firefighters. The fact remains that the evaluation of firefighters is

a local issue (R. Coleman, telephone interview, March 6, 2006), and (K. Nida, telephone interview, March 7, 2006).

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), Standard 1001, Standard for Firefighter Professional Qualifications is the only recognized source document cited by most Fire Departments across the United States (R. Coleman, telephone interview, March 6, 2006). NFPA Standard 1001 specifies “the minimum job performance requirements for fire fighters” (NFPA, 2002, 1.1). The document is divided into six chapters: Administration, Referenced Publications, Definitions, Entrance Requirements, Firefighter 1, and Firefighter 2. It addresses the following key areas of performance: General Knowledge, General Skills, Fire Department Communications, Fireground Operations, Rescue Operations, Prevention, Preparedness, and Maintenance. Each key area is broken down into more specific requirements throughout the document.

Where the NFPA addresses overall firefighter standards, the NWCG was initially created for the purpose of “establishing an operational group designed to coordinate programs of the participating wildfire management agencies” (NWCG 2005). The base document created by the NWCG established the position standards for those engaged in wildland firefighting operations based on a certification and qualification system (PMS 310-1, 2006). The relationship of the NWCG with regards to the fire service in California will be explained further in the research.

Founded in 1932, the International Fire Service Training Association was created for the purpose of producing and marketing validated fire service training materials that were high-quality, technically accurate, and affordable (IFSTA, 2005). The IFSTA does not create firefighter standards. The IFSTA produces fire service materials which are based on the NFPA standards.

The NIMS “was developed so responders from different jurisdictions and disciplines can work together better to respond to natural disaster and emergencies, including acts of terrorism” (NIMS 2006a). On October 4, 2005, the NIMS Integration Center was established to assist agencies with the implementation of the NIMS within their respective jurisdictions (NIMS, 2006). The official NIMS program outlines the elements of command and control, and how information is coordinated (NIMS 2006b). NIMS is a nationally recognized standard, however, California has modified the NIMS to reflect issues in California (R. Coleman, telephone interview, March 6, 2006).

In California, the responsibility for establishing firefighter standards has been given to the California State Fire Marshal (CSFM). The standards as set forth by the NFPA have been formally adopted by the State Board of Fire Services. However, the standards have been interpreted and placed in a format specifically for use by fire departments in California. (R. Coleman, telephone interview, March 6, 2006).

On November 2, 2000, the California State Board of Fire Services approved the standards as identified in PMS 310-1, and created the California Incident Command Certification System (CICCS) (NIMSC, 2006). CICCS identifies the minimum standards for positions who engage in wildland firefighting operations in California based on a rigid certification and qualification system.

Research Question 3: In addition to obtaining information on the Benicia Fire Department, interviews were conducted to obtain information on the firefighter evaluation processes used by each of the other six career, or combination, fire departments in Solano County: City of Dixon, City of Fairfield, City of Rio Vista, City of Suisun, City of Vacaville,

and City of Vallejo. The interviews, with the results noted in (Table 1), started with the following two questions, asked of each agency:

1. Does the fire department conduct annual performance evaluations on its firefighters?
2. Was a formal process used to develop the annual performance evaluation process currently being used?

Table 1

Answers to specific questions asked of local fire service agency

	<u>Formal Evaluation</u>	<u>Formal Process</u>
City of Benicia	Yes	No
City of Dixon	Yes	No
City of Fairfield	Yes	No
City of Rio Vista	Yes	No
City of Suisun	Yes	No
City of Vacaville	Yes	No
City of Vallejo	No	N/A

The Benicia Fire Department uses an annual process to evaluate firefighters, however the processes used to determine the firefighter evaluation process is unclear. In fact, there were no formal records available to specifically document the processes used to validate the current system (K. Imboden, personal interview, September 6, 2005). O'Connell confirmed the lack of documentation but pointed out that the City currently reviews the evaluation process on an as needed basis (D. O'Connell, personal interview, October 12, 2005).

Imboden described the process the City of Benicia uses to update the firefighters' job description explaining that typically it is updated just prior to a hiring process, but could be updated at any time. Just prior to recruitment, HR sends the Fire Chief a current copy of the job description asking for changes. The Fire Chief reviews the document and makes the necessary updates, then forwards the document back to HR for review by the HR Director. Once it passes through the HR Director, the recommended changes are sent to the Firefighters Union, and then placed on the agenda for review by the Civil Service Commission. Pending no issues, the Civil Service Commission approves the changes as written; modifies the changes; or denies the changes. If the Firefighters Union and the City are not in agreement with regard to the impact of the changes, the City schedules a Meet and Confer process with the Firefighters Union. If no agreement is reached and the two groups are at impasse, the City has three options: Call in a Mediator and attempt to resolve the issues; drop the changes altogether; or implement the changes under very strict regulation. In most cases, both parties prefer the cooperative approach. On a final note, the fire department is not the only source for recommending changes. HR can recommend updates as well, based on changes in the industry standards (K. Imboden, personal interview, February 18, 2006).

The 1982 version of the firefighter job description was obtained from an existing job description from outside the area. The Fire Chief at the time approved the job description then sent it forward to the Civil Service Commission for final approval (M. Tessier, personal interview, August 24, 2005).

The firefighter evaluation process was first adopted from a generic evaluation tool used by other cities. The document, more specifically the form used to perform the evaluation, has undergone at least two revisions over the past twenty years. There is currently no official

process in place to update the firefighter evaluation process. If the Fire Chief or appropriate designee sees the need for a change, the form is changed, and the new information added. An evaluation guideline was established in the mid-1980s, and updated by HR in 2001; however, no one is clear on its roots (K. Imboden, personal interview, September 6, 2005).

Benicia Fire Department Deputy Chief Mike Tessier explained that he was part of an attempt to perform a job analysis for each position in the Benicia Fire Department approximately twenty years ago. He went on to explain that “the last attempt to perform a full job analysis for the fire department was in 1984 or 1985, where a company called Wolf & Corey, Inc. put together several instruments. However, the process was never completely finished, mostly due to political or cultural issues” (M. Tessier, personal interview, February 17, 2006). Benicia Fire Department Deputy Chief Gene Gantt also participated in the Wolf & Corey, Inc. process, suggesting that the organizational culture was not ready for change (G. Gantt, personal interview, February 16, 2006).

Imboden acknowledged that what makes this research most significant is the lack of a tangible connection between the firefighter job description, the city policy covering performance evaluations, and the evaluation form used to evaluate firefighters (K. Imboden, personal interview, September 6, 2005)

Unexpected Result: While the initial scope of this research was to provide a list of objective standards for consideration, it became evident that a formal analysis of the firefighters job description with regards to the performance evaluation process may not have been conducted (K. Imboden, personal communication, September 6, 2005), and (D. O’Connell, personal communication, October 12, 2005). In addition, there is no written evidence to support a direct connection between the current firefighter job description and the current firefighter evaluation

process. Even if an objective list of standards were to be produced for consideration, a formal analysis must be performed in order to determine the validity of the list (K. Imboden, personal interview, September 6, 2005).

The Dixon Fire Department uses an annual evaluation process to evaluate firefighters, however the processes used to determine the firefighter evaluation process is unclear (A. Horigan, phone interview March 17, 2006). Former City of Dixon HR Analyst Celeste Garrett could not recall if a formal process had ever been used to establish the employee evaluation program (C. Garrett, telephone interview March 17, 2006).

Horigan explained that the Fire Chief was responsible for updating the firefighter job description just before hiring a new employee. If the Fire Chief recommends changes, HR will review and approve the changes. She was not clear on how the firefighter evaluation program was initially established, and there is currently no official process in place to update the firefighter evaluation process. If the Fire Chief or appropriate designee sees the need for a change, the form is changed, and the new information added (A. Horigan, phone interview March 17, 2006).

City of Fairfield HR Employee Relations Manager Dawn Villarreal stated that “I’ve been here for over eight years, and whatever process was used to establish the system the fire department currently uses was done long before I got here.” She went on to explain that no formal documentation was available to validate the current fire department employee evaluation program. In addition, the Fire Department has conducted several reviews of the firefighter job description and evaluation process over the past fifteen years, but was unclear on what changes were made. Finally, she explained that the Police Department conducted a formal process through the Marin Consulting Group a number of years ago. It was her hope that the Fire

Department would conduct a similar process. (D. Villarreal, telephone interview, March 20, 2006).

Tossah Ebert, Office Specialist for the Fairfield Fire Department commented that each evaluation comes across her desk, and they appear very inconsistent. She cited the Police Department process indicating that the Fire Department could benefit from a similar process (T. Ebert, phone interview, March 20, 2006).

Fire Chief Mark Nelson from the Rio Vista Fire Department stated that his organization inherited an evaluation tool prior to his arrival. He was not aware of any formal processes taking place to establish the system, but indicated that he is looking into updating a number of key documents in his organization to assist with establishing a new system. Chief Nelson stated that he was not clear on how the process would be updated, but indicated that he would look to a management consulting firm for suggestions (M. Nelson, telephone interview, March 27, 2006).

Fire Chief Mike O'Brien of the Suisun City Fire Department was not clear of how his evaluation process was established. He went on to explain that his HR Department had no record of a formal process, and no recollection that a formal study had ever been conducted. He went on to explain that minor modifications have been made over the past few years to professionalize the process (M. O'Brien, personal interview, September 7, 2005).

The City of Vacaville Fire Department uses a system driven by management from the late 1980s. The process includes a significant narrative component, which is cumbersome, and sometimes subjective. The evaluation program was updated a few years ago using a cooperative process. However, the current system is laborious, and may be losing its overall effectiveness. The process used to implement the current system started with the Police Department by forming a committee. A multi-step process was established to analyze each position, and then the results

were tied to the evaluation process. Approximately two years later, the Fire Department adopted the system with several modifications. However, it was not clear if the Fire Department formally analyzed each position as did the Police Department (C. Garrett, telephone interview, March 20, 2006). Training Officer Shep Harper commented that the current process relied heavily on writing skills, which added a level of subjectivity to the system (S. Harper, personal interview, March 21, 2006).

The Vallejo Fire Department does not use an annual evaluation process for any employees of the fire department. The only formal evaluation of employees takes place during the first three years of employment (L. Morris, personal interview, December 4, 2005). In a follow-up discussion with City of Vallejo Acting Assistant HR Director Deborah Boutte, she indicated that for the past several years the City of Vallejo had been working on implementing an employee evaluation process for the Fire Department. She went on to explain that many Departments within the City are using the new evaluation process, however, during the part of the process where job analysis was being tied to the performance it was discovered that the Fire Department rules and regulations were outdated. The process for the Fire Department was temporarily suspended until the opportunity presented itself to update the Fire Department Rules and Regulations. Once the Rules and Regulations have been updated, the development of the evaluation tools will be established for the Fire Department (D. Boutte, telephone interview, March 22, 2006).

Research Question 4: Coleman stated that “Many fire service organizations do not follow an organized process when updating standards, job descriptions, or evaluation programs” (R. Coleman, telephone interview, March 6, 2006). Hudson, also pointed out that “the organizations

who have the greatest problems are the ones who do not follow any established process” (D. Hudson, telephone interview, March 24, 2006).

To assist in the development of processes used by organizations, Hudson noted that the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures provides a basis for processes used in testing, evaluation, hiring, promotion, etc. (D. Hudson, telephone interview, March 24, 2006). Resurreccion added that the UG was an invaluable resource for employment practices, and processes (R. Resurreccion, telephone interview, January 3, 2006). The Uniform Guidelines do not specify which processes to follow. It provides “principles which are designed to assist employers, labor organizations, employment agencies, and licensing and certification boards to comply with requirements of Federal law prohibiting employment practices which discriminate on grounds of race, color, religion, sex, and national origin” (Biddle, 1978).

Notwithstanding Hudson’s six step process in the development of performance standards, as noted in the answer to question 1, he stated that establishing a firefighter performance evaluation process required a series of individual processes, each addressing a particular component. He recommended that organizations:

develop organizational goals and objectives; perform a detailed job analysis; develop a job description based on the job analysis; establish benchmarks or dimensions to be evaluated; develop performance standards linked to the organizational goals and objectives, and the job description; establish a performance management policy; develop and implement training guidelines; implement the performance evaluation program; and perform periodic updating (D. Hudson, telephone interview, March 24, 2006).

The Performance-Based Handbook outlines a six step process to establish a Performance-Based Management Program (Artley, W., Ellison D.J., & Kennedy B., September 2001). The

Performance Management: Development Plan – for organizations, subsystems, process or employees, illustrates a slightly different approach using fourteen steps for the development of a Performance Plan (Appendix A). The Leading Community Risk Reduction, Community Risk Model is an example of a tried and true process (NFA, 2003, p.SM 0-10).

The Performance Management Process Checklist illustrates five processes, which will assist in the development of a Performance Management Process (Appendix B).

DISCUSSION

Conducting this research was a necessary step in the planning process to update the current firefighter evaluation process for the Benicia Fire Department. A number of processes used by the City of Benicia, and the Benicia Fire Department have been identified. However, the facts remain that documentation of the processes used to establish the employee evaluation process is unclear (K. Imboden, personal interview, September 6, 2005). The lack of follow-through on several processes leading up to the current evaluation process was not noted in (Fiori, 2003). However, this research identified the issues, and made the necessary changes in the scope of the research.

Hudson noted that establishing a firefighter performance evaluation process required a series of individual processes, each addressing a particular component. He recommended that organizations:

develop organizational goals and objectives; perform a detailed job analysis; develop a job description based on the job analysis; establish benchmarks or dimensions to be evaluated; develop performance standards linked to the organizational goals and objectives, and the job description; establish a performance management policy; develop

and implement training guidelines; implement the performance evaluation program; and perform periodic updating (D. Hudson, telephone interview, March 24, 2006).

Using Hudson's example it is painfully evident that the processes used to establish, and possibly those used to update, the firefighter evaluation process need substantial and immediate attention. According to the written documentation referenced by the Human Resources Department, whatever processes that could be identified were never completed. There is no documented organizational goals and objectives for the Benicia Fire Department. There is no documentation of a completed detailed job analysis for the position of firefighter. There is a firefighter job description, however there is no documentation to support its origin, or that has ever been tied to the current evaluation process. There is an established firefighter evaluation process, however there is no documentation that links it to any benchmarks, dimensions, standards, or job description. There is a performance management policy, however there is no documentation to support how it was developed. There is a performance evaluation training document, however there is no documentation that formal training has ever been conducted on how to use it. Finally, the employee evaluation form has undergone several changes in the last few years, however the changes were mostly cosmetic.

In addition to obtaining information on the Benicia Fire Department, interviews were conducted to obtain information on the firefighter evaluation processes used by each of the other six career, or combination, fire departments in Solano County: the City of Dixon, the City of Fairfield, the City of Rio Vista, the City of Suisun, the City of Vacaville, and the City of Vallejo. The results were similar to those in the City of Benicia, in that formal documentation of how evaluation programs were established was limited, or non-existent. At least two Cities used

formal processes designed for the police department to establish the process utilized by the fire department.

While most people interviewed for this research expanded on issues and methods to improve the traditional evaluation process used by most fire department across the country, not everyone is a proponent of the traditional evaluation process. Broman commented on process by pointing out that his organization has invested more time “developing a good road map rather than spending time with evaluation processes which typically don’t work” (J. Broman, telephone interview, March 7, 2006).

A number of fire service related standards and guidelines have been identified for use by organizations to assist with the development of processes. There are many standards, guidelines, and processes readily available. However, how those standards are used is strictly a “local issue” (R. Coleman, telephone interview, March 6, 2006 and K. Nida, telephone interview, March 7, 2006).

There is a wide range of issues with regards to why fire departments have their own rules. Coleman pointed out that the standards are subject to interpretation (R. Coleman, personal interview, March 6, 2006). Nida cited budget issues and lack of priority as an issue (K. Nida, telephone interview, March 7, 2006). Broman suggested that time is better spent on “developing a good road map rather than spending time with evaluation process which typically don’t work” (J. Broman, telephone interview, March 7, 2006). Finally, Dorsett provided additional insight indicating that “lack of education at the top – no catalyst for change; history of tradition, and economic issues” was a big contributor to the problem (M. Dorsett, telephone interview, March 19, 2006).

In digesting the information from this research it would be easy to form a first impression that the City of Benicia, more specifically the Benicia Fire Department may be utilizing an outdated and flawed evaluation system. While the possibility exists that the current evaluation system could be outdated and flawed, the issue at hand is the process, not the result. The correct conclusion is that the processes used to establish the current process are flawed, and are in need of immediate attention. When the recommendations of this research are implemented, the process will validate the final product.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Establish a contract with a Management Consultant to assist in the development or updating of the firefighter performance evaluation process.
2. Using a collaborative approach, with representatives from labor and management, develop organizational goals and objectives for the Benicia Fire Department.
3. Update the current firefighter job description by performing a job analysis using a recognized job analysis tool.
4. Using a collaborative approach, with representatives from labor and management, develop benchmarks, dimensions and standards that tie the job description to the evaluation process.
5. Using a collaborative approach, with representatives from labor and management, develop a performance policy.
6. Develop a training program to instruct supervisors on how to perform evaluation.
7. Implement the performance evaluation program, updating on a regular basis.

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Appendix A

Performance Management: Development Plan
(for organizations, subsystems, processes or employees)

Performance Management: Development Plan (for organizations, subsystems, processes or employees)

Written by Carter McNamara, PhD - Applies to nonprofits and for-profits unless noted
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Overall Goal

Overall Goal and Focuses of Performance Management

The overall goal of performance management is to ensure that the organization and all of its subsystems (processes, departments, teams, employees, etc.) are working together in an optimum fashion to achieve the results desired by the organization.

Performance Improvement of the Organization or a Subsystem is an Integrated Process

Note that because performance management strives to optimize results and alignment of all subsystems to achieve the overall results of the organization, any focus of performance management within the organization (whether on department, process, employees, etc.) should ultimately affect overall organizational performance management as well.

Ongoing Activities of Performance Management

Achieving the overall goal requires several ongoing activities, including identification and prioritization of desired results, establishing means to measure progress toward those results, setting standards for assessing how well results were achieved, tracking and measuring progress toward results, exchanging ongoing feedback among those participants working to achieve results, periodically reviewing progress, reinforcing activities that achieve results and intervening to improve progress where needed. Note that results themselves are also measures.

Note that these general activities are somewhat similar to several other major approaches in organizations, e.g., strategic planning, management by objectives, Total Quality Management, etc. Performance management brings focus on overall results, measuring results, focused and ongoing feedback about results, and development plans to improve results. The results measurements themselves are not the ultimate priority as much as ongoing feedback and adjustments to meet results.

The steps in performance management are also similar to those in a well-designed training process, when the process can be integrated with the overall goals of the organization. Trainers are focusing much more on results for performance. Many trainers with this priority now call themselves performance consultants.

Basic Steps

Various authors propose various steps for performance management. The typical performance management process includes some or all of the following steps, whether in performance management of organizations, subsystems, processes, etc. Note that how the steps are carried out can vary widely, depending on the focus of the performance efforts and who is in charge of carrying it out. For example, an economist might identify financial results, such as return on investment, profit rate, etc. An industrial psychologist might identify more human-based results, such as employee productivity.

The following steps are described more fully in the topics Performance Plan, Performance Appraisal and Development Plan, including through use of an example application. The steps are generally followed in sequence, but rarely followed in exact sequence. Results from one step can be used to immediately update or modify earlier steps. For example, the performance plan itself may be updated as a result of lessons learned during the ongoing observation, measurement and feedback step.

NOTE: The following steps occur in a wide context of many activities geared towards performance improvement in an organization, for example, activities such as management development, planning, organizing and coordinating activities.

1. Review organizational goals to associate preferred organizational results in terms of units of performance, that is, quantity, quality, cost or timeliness (note that the result itself is therefore a measure)
2. Specify desired results for the domain -- as guidance, focus on results needed by other domains (e.g., products or services need by internal or external customers)
3. Ensure the domain's desired results directly contribute to the organization's results
4. Weight, or prioritize, the domain's desired results
5. Identify first-level measures to evaluate if and how well the domain's desired results were achieved
6. Identify more specific measures for each first-level measure if necessary
7. Identify standards for evaluating how well the desired results were achieved (e.g., "below expectations", "meets expectations" and "exceeds expectations")
8. Document a performance plan -- including desired results, measures and standards
9. Conduct ongoing observations and measurements to track performance
10. Exchange ongoing feedback about performance

11. Conduct a performance appraisal (sometimes called performance review)
12. If performance meets the desired performance standard, then reward for performance (the nature of the reward depends on the domain)
13. If performance does not meet the desired performance standards, then develop or update a performance development plan to address the performance gap* (See Notes 1 and 2)
14. Repeat steps 9 to 13 until performance is acceptable, standards are changed, the domain is replaced, management decides to do nothing, etc.

* Note 1: Inadequate performance does not always indicate a problem on the part of the domain. Performance standards may be unrealistic or the domain may have insufficient resources. Similarly, the overall strategies or the organization, or its means to achieving its top-level goals, may be unrealistic or without sufficient resources.

* Note 2: When performance management is applied to an employee or group of employees, a development plan can be initiated in a variety of situations, e.g.,:

- a.) When a performance appraisal indicates performance improvement is needed, that is, that there is a "performance gap"
- b.) To "benchmark" the status of improvement so far in a development effort
- c.) As part of a professional development for the employee or group of employees, in which case there is not a performance gap as much as an "growth gap"
- d.) As part of succession planning to help an employee be eligible for a planned change in role in the organization, in which case there also is not a performance gap as much as an "opportunity gap"
- e.) To "pilot", or test, the operation of a new performance management system

Key Terms

Domain

The domain is the focus of the performance management effort, e.g., the entire organization, a process, subsystem or an employee. A subsystem could be, e.g., departments, programs (implementing new policies and procedures to ensure a safe workplace; or, for a nonprofit, ongoing delivery of services to a community), projects (automating the billing process, moving to a new building, etc.), or teams or groups organized to accomplish a result for an internal or external customer. A process produces a product or service for internal or external customers, and usually cuts across multiple subsystems. Examples of processes are market research to identify customer needs, product design, product development, budget development, customer service, financial planning and management, program development, etc. The final domain is that of employee performance management. The term domain is not widespread across performance management literature.

Results

These are usually the final and specific outputs desired from the domain. Results are often expressed as products or services for an internal or external customers, but not always. They may be in terms of financial accomplishments, impact on a community, etc. Results are expressed in terms of cost, quality, quantity or time.

Measures

Measures provide specific information used to assess the extent of accomplishment of results. Measurements are typically expressed in terms of time, quantity, quality or cost. Results are a form of measure.

Indicators

Indicators are also measures. They indicate progress (or lack of) toward a result. For example, some indicators of an employee's progress toward achieving preferred results might be some measure of an employee's learning (usually expressed in terms of areas of knowledge or specific skills) and productivity (usually measured in terms of some number of outputs per time interval). (Note that learning and productivity alone do not guarantee accomplishment of performance results.)

Organization's Preferred Goals

These are usually overall accomplishments desired by an organization and are often established during strategic planning. The level of specificity of goals depends on the nature and needs of the organizations. Typically, the more specific the goals, the clearer the understanding of goals by the members of the organization.

Organization's Preferred Results

The performance management process often includes translating organizational goals to be in terms of results, which themselves are described in terms of quantity, quality, timeliness or cost.

Aligning Results

Performance management puts strong focus on ensuring that all parts of the organization are working as efficiently and effectively as possible toward achieving organizational results. Therefore, the results of all parts of the organization should be aligned with the overall preferred results of the organization. Aligning results often includes answering questions such as "Does the domain's preferred results contribute to achieving the organization's preferred results? How? Is there anything else that the domain could be doing to contribute more directly to the organization's goals?"

Weighting Results

Weighting results refers to prioritizing the domain's preferred results, often expressed in terms of a ranking (such as 1, 2, 3, etc.), percentage-time-spent, etc.

Standards

These specify how well a preferred result should be achieved by the domain. For example, "meets expectations" or "exceeds expectations".

Performance Plan

The plan usually includes at least the domain's preferred results, how the results tie back to the organization's preferred results, weighting of results, how results will be measured and what standards are used to evaluate results.

Ongoing Observation, Measurements and Feedback

These activities include observing the domain's activities in terms of progress toward preferred results, comparing progress to the preferred performance standards and then providing ongoing feedback (useful, understood and timely information to improve performance) to the domain.

Performance Appraisal (or Review)

In its most basic form, performance appraisal (or review) activities include documenting achieved results (hopefully, by also including use of examples to clarify documentation) and indicating if standards were met or not. The appraisal usually includes some form of a development plan to address insufficient performance. (More about this plan below.)

Rewards

The performance review process usually adds information about rewarding the employee(s) if performance met or exceeded standards. Rewards can take many forms, e.g., merit increases, promotions, certificates of appreciation, letters of commendation, etc.

Performance Gap

This represents the difference in actual performance shown as compared to the desired standard of performance. In employee performance management efforts, this performance gap is often described in terms of needed knowledge and skills which become training and development goals for the employee.

Performance Development Plan

Typically, this plan conveys how the conclusion was made that there was inadequate performance, what actions are to be taken and by whom and when, when performance will be reviewed again and how. Note that a development plan for employee performance management may be initiated for various reasons other than poor performance. (More on this later in Development Plan.)

Development and Contents of a Performance Plan

Most of us are used to thinking of performance management focused on the employee, rather than the organization, groups, etc. Therefore, when first reviewing the steps to develop a performance plan, it may be best to use the example of employee performance management as done below. The reader should keep in mind that these steps might be followed in performance efforts focused on the entire organization or some subsystem of the organization.

In the example below, the focus -- or domain -- of the performance management process is an employee. The employee is a machine operator; consequently, application of performance

management in this example is rather straightforward for clarity in the example. Most applications are not this straightforward.

NOTE: As review about key terms in performance management, key terms are bolded and italicized below.

1. Review organizational goals to associate preferred organizational results in terms of units of performance, that is, quantity, quality, cost or timeliness

Organizational goals are often established during strategic planning. Performance management translates these goals to *results*, which typically are described in terms of quantity, quality, timeliness or cost. Results are the primary products or services desired from the focus of the performance process. Examples are a percentage increase in sales, extent of impact on a certain community, etc. Goals should be "SMART" (an acronym), that is, specific, measurable, acceptable, realistic to achieve and time-bound with a deadline. For example, an overall goal may be to increase the organization's profit by 30% by the end of the next fiscal year. An associated strategy (or sub-goal), among others, may be to increase profit of the Catalog Department by 50% over the next fiscal year.

2. Specify desired results for the domain -- as guidance, focus on results needed by other domains (e.g., to internal or external customers)

For example, the operator's results are high-quality, printed images for the internal customer, the Catalog Department. This aspect of performance management is sometimes called "goal setting", particularly when the focus of the performance process is on employees. Goals should be "SMART" and challenging.

3. Ensure the domain's desired results directly contribute to the organization's results

Aligning results with organizational results is another unique aspect of performance management process. Do the employee's results directly contribute to the results of the organization? What organizational goals? How? For example, do the prints directly contribute to the desired profit increase of 50% of the Catalog Department? How? Is there anything else the operator could be doing that would be more productive for this goal? Should a job analysis be done to verify efficiency?

4. Weight, or prioritize, the domain's desired results

A *weight*, or prioritization, is often in the form of percentage-time-spent, or a numeric ranking with "1" as the highest. For example, the employee's results might be weighted as follows:

- a) 80% of his time over an 8-hour period, Monday through Friday over the next fiscal year, to be spent running the machine
- b) 10% of this time in training
- c) 10% of this time in a Quality Circle.

5. Identify first-level measures to evaluate if and how well the domain's desired results were achieved

Measures provide information to evaluate accomplishment of results. Measures are usually specified in terms of quantity, quality, timeliness or cost. For example, measures for the operator might be the number of prints over some time interval, a certain grade on a test during his

training and attendance recorded on attendance sheets to his Quality Circle. Identifying which measures to take is often the toughest part of the performance management process. You have to look at the appropriate level or domain in the organization, its desired results, and consider what are the most valid, reliable and practical measurements to use. With complex and rapidly changing domains, it often helps to identify *outcome and driver measures*, and *patterns of effects*. More about these terms in Performance Measurement, which is also referenced back in Basic Overview of Performance Management.)

6. Identify more specific measures for each first-level measure if necessary

For example, regarding the operator's measure for operating his machine, he may have to produce at least 500 high-quality prints an hour for eight hours, Monday through Friday during the fiscal year. High-quality means no smears or tears. The Director of the Catalog Department evaluates whether the operator made this goal or not.

7. Identify standards for evaluating how well the domain's desired results were achieved

Standards specify how well a result should be achieved. For example, the operator "meets expectations" if the Director of the Catalog Department agrees that the operator produced 500 high-quality prints an hour for eight hours, Monday through Friday during the fiscal year. If he produces 600, he "exceeds expectations", 700 is "superior performance", 400 is "does not meet expectation", etc.

8. Document a performance plan -- including desired results, measures and standards

The *performance plan* describes the domain's preferred results, how results tie back to the organization's results, weighting of results, how results will be measured and what standards are used to evaluate results. Developing the plan is often the responsibility of the head of the domain (in this example, the employee's supervisor). However, the plan should be developed as much as possible with participants in the domain. (Note that a performance plan is not the same as a "performance development plan", which is mentioned later below.)

NOTE: Now is the best time to take stock of overall performance plans. Does the domain have the necessary resources to achieve preferred results, e.g., necessary funding, training, input from other subsystems, etc? Are the standards realistic? Can the domain realistically achieve the results within the preferred time frame? Does everyone involved in the measures really understand how to recognize the measures? Do they know their role in the performance management process?

Basic Steps in a Performance Appraisal

As described in that last subsection, development of the Performance Plan typically includes the first eight steps of the basic 14 steps in performance management. The Performance Appraisal picks up from step nine. We also continue our example of the machine operator. At this point in our example, the Performance Plan has been developed.

Information in this section is generic to performance management, that is, the information generally applies to any performance management effort, e.g., organization, process, subsystem or employee.

NOTE: As review about key terms in performance management, key terms are bolded and italicized below.

9. Conduct ongoing observations and measurements to track performance

The operator's supervisor would observe the number of high-quality prints, including staying in contact with the Director of the Catalog Department.

10. Exchange ongoing feedback about performance

Feedback is information relevant to how well results are being achieved. Useful feedback is timely, feasible and understood. Ideally, feedback address key activities to improve or reinforce performance. Usually, the larger the number of sources giving feedback, the more accurate is the depiction of events. In our example, the employee, supervisor and Director of the Catalog Department should continue to share impressions of how well results are being achieved. Any ideas to improve or support performance should be implemented as appropriate. *This ongoing feedback is often one of the most important aspects of performance management.*

11. Conduct a performance appraisal (sometimes called performance review)

A *performance appraisal (or review)* includes documentation of expected results, standards of performance, progress toward achieving of results, how well they were achieved, examples indicating achievement, suggestions to improve performance and how those suggestions can be followed. If the above steps in the performance management process were followed, the performance appraisal is usually quite straightforward to carry out. In our example, the appraisal should include input from the employee, supervisor and Director of the Catalog Department. The performance appraisal should be carried out at regular intervals as performance tracking is underway.

12. If performance meets desired performance standards, reward for performance

In our example, the machine operator may be due some form of reward, that is, recognition or compensation, e.g., letter of recognition, promotion, letter of commendation, etc. This step in the performance management process is often overlooked when focusing on organization-wide performance improvement, or on a major subsystem.

Appendix B

Performance Management Checklist

Performance Management Process Checklist

Written by Susan M. Heathfield

Source of the material:

<http://humanresources.about.com/od/performancemanagement/a/perfmgmt.htm>

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Performance appraisals, performance reviews, appraisal forms, whatever you want to call them, let's call them gone! As a stand-alone, annual assault, a performance appraisal is universally disliked and avoided. After all, how many people in your organization want to hear that they were less than perfect last year? How many managers want to face the arguments and diminished morale that can result from the performance appraisal process?

How many supervisors feel their time is well-spent professionally to document and provide proof to support their feedback - all year long? Plus, the most important outputs for the performance appraisal, from each person's job, may not be defined or measurable in your current work system. Make the appraisal system one step harder to manage and tie the employee's salary increase to their numeric rating.

If the true goal of the performance appraisal is employee development and organizational improvement, consider moving to a performance management system. Place the focus on what you really want to create in your organization - performance management and development. As part of that system, you will want to use this checklist to guide your participation in the Performance Management and Development Process. You can also use this checklist to help you in a more traditional performance appraisal process.

In a recent Human Resources Forum poll, 16 percent of the people responding have no performance appraisal system at all. Supervisory opinions, provided once a year, are the only appraisal process for 56 percent of respondents. Another 16 percent described their appraisals as based solely on supervisor opinions, but administered more than once a year.

If you follow this checklist, I am convinced you will offer a performance management and development system that will significantly improve the appraisal process you currently manage. Staff will feel better about participating and the performance management system may even positively affect - performance.

Preparation and Planning for Performance Management

Much work is invested, on the front end, to improve a traditional employee appraisal process. In fact, managers can feel as if the new process is too time consuming. Once the foundation of developmental goals is in place, however, time to administer the system decreases. Each of these steps is taken with the participation and cooperation of the employee, for best results.

Performance Management and Development in the General Work System

- Define the purpose of the job, job duties, and responsibilities.
- Define performance goals with measurable outcomes.
- Define the priority of each job responsibility and goal.
- Define performance standards for key components of the job.
- Hold interim discussions and provide feedback about employee performance, preferably daily, summarized and discussed, at least, quarterly. (Provide positive and constructive feedback.)
- Maintain a record of performance through critical incident reports. (Jot notes about contributions or problems throughout the quarter, in an employee file.)
- Provide the opportunity for broader feedback. Use a 360 degree performance feedback system that incorporates feedback from the employee's peers, customers, and people who may report to him.
- Develop and administer a coaching and improvement plan if the employee is not meeting expectations.

Immediate Preparation for the Performance Development Meeting

- Schedule the Performance Development Planning (PDP) meeting and define pre-work with the staff member.
- The staff member reviews personal performance, documents “self-assessment” comments and gathers needed documentation, including 360 degree feedback results, when available.
- The supervisor prepares for the PDP meeting by collecting data including work records, reports, and input from others familiar with the staff person's work.
- Both examine how the employee is performing against all criteria, and think about areas for potential development.
- Develop a plan for the PDP meeting which includes answers to all questions on the performance development tool with examples, documentation and so on.

The Performance Development Process (PDP) Meeting

- Establish a comfortable, private setting and rapport with the staff person.
- Discuss and agree upon the objective of the meeting, to create a performance development plan.
- The staff member discusses the achievements and progress he has accomplished during the quarter.
- The staff member identifies ways in which he would like to further develop his professional performance, including training, assignments, new challenges and so on.
- The supervisor discusses performance for the quarter and suggests ways in which the staff member might further develop his performance.
- Add the supervisor's thoughts to the employee's selected areas of development and improvement.
- Discuss areas of agreement and disagreement, and reach consensus.
- Examine job responsibilities for the coming quarter and in general.

- Agree upon standards for performance for the key job responsibilities.
- Set goals for the quarter.
- Discuss how the goals support the accomplishment of the organization's business plan, the department's objectives and so on.[\li]
- Agree upon a measurement for each goal.
- Assuming performance is satisfactory, establish a development plan with the staff person, that helps him grow professionally in ways important to him.
- If performance is less than satisfactory, develop a written performance improvement plan, and schedule more frequent feedback meetings. Remind the employee of the consequences connected with continued poor performance.
- The supervisor and employee discuss employee feedback and constructive suggestions for the supervisor and the department.
- Discuss anything else the supervisor or employee would like to discuss, hopefully, maintaining the positive and constructive environment established thus far, during the meeting.
- Mutually sign the performance development tool to indicate the discussion has taken place.
- End the meeting in a positive and supportive manner. The supervisor expresses confidence that the employee can accomplish the plan and that the supervisor is available for support and assistance.
- Set a time-frame for formal follow up, generally quarterly.

Following the Performance Development Process Meeting

- If a performance improvement plan was necessary, follow up at the designated times.
- Follow up with performance feedback and discussions regularly throughout the quarter. (An employee should never be surprised about the content of feedback at the performance development meeting.)
- The supervisor needs to keep commitments relative to the agreed upon development plan, including time needed away from the job, payment for courses, agreed upon work assignments and so on.
- The supervisor needs to act upon the feedback from departmental members and let staff members know what has changed, based upon their feedback.
- Forward appropriate documentation to the Human Resources office and retain a copy of the plan for easy access and referral.